

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE



THE OFFICE OF FISHERY COORDINATION

For Immediate Release

Starfish, bitterest subsea foe of oysters and commercial oystermen, now face destruction by a new "secret weapon".

Applied directly in conserving this shell-fishery resource, the weapon is seen as another practical move in the direction of increased food production sought by Fishery Coordinator Harold L. Ickes. Devised by biologists of the Fish and Wildlife Service, it is described in the current issue of the Service's publication, Fishery Market News.

Even the famous "defense in depth", so-called, as practiced by starfish, is powerless to help them, according to the Market News; the new device finds and kills them even in deep water. The new weapon is a machine for spreading quicklime on starfish-infested bottoms. As recently demonstrated by Service oyster experts, "particles of lime coming in contact with a starfish embed themselves in the membrane covering the animal, creating lesions and wounds, which eventually kill it. Therefore, the main principle of the method is to distribute the lime on the bottom very uniformly so that the majority, or, if possible, all the starfish will be affected by the chemical".

Built by J. Lucash, biologist station foreman, the lime-spreader was created by the staff of the Service's Milford (Conn.) Laboratory. Many local oyster companies cooperated in the construction of the spreader by lending the laboratory certain parts and materials which now, because of the war conditions, cannot be readily purchased. The mechanical features of the new apparatus, which can be easily installed on any oyster boat, are simple.

A demonstration of the device was given recently before a group of oyster growers. It is understood that several local companies are now constructing similar machines to begin chemical warfare on the starfish predators which, annually, cause thousands of dollars damage to the cultivated oyster beds in New England waters and elsewhere.